

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6501

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 4791

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR UK SP

SUBJECT: RUMORED DESIGNATION OF FRAGA AS AMB TO LONDON

1. AN EMBASSY SOURCE REPORTS THAT FORMER MININFO MANUEL FRAGA IRIBARNE WILL BE CONFIRMED AS AMBASSADOR TO LONDON AT NEXT MEETING OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, SEPTEMBER 14 IN SAN SEBASTIAN. SOURCE SAYS HMG'S AGREEMENT ALREADY REQUESTED BY GOS.

2. COMMENT: FRAGA IS ONE OF SPAIN'S MOST PROMINENT POLITICAL FIGURES. A CAREER DIPLOMAT, FULL PROFESSOR (CATEDRATICO), PROLIFIC WRITER AND LECTURER, FRAGA CURRENTLY HOLDS NO OFFICIAL POSITION IN THE ADMINISTRATION, ALTHOUGH HE IS A NATIONAL COUNCILOR OF THE MOVEMENT BY DIRECT DESIGNATION OF FRANCO. HE IS CURRENTLY DIRECTOR OF "EL AGUILA", A MAJOR BREWERY.

3. IF REPORT TRUE, THIS APPOINTMENT APPEARS AS A SHREWD PLAY BY PRESIDENT CARRERO BLANCO TO BROADEN THE BASE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. AFTER BEING REMOVED AS INFORMATION AND TORUSM MINISTER FROM CABINET IN OCTOBER 1969, FRAGA BECAME AN OUTSPOKEN ENEMY OF THE "TECHNOCRAT" FACTION HEADED BY LAUREANO LOPEZ RODO AND INCLUDING FORMER FONMIN LOPEZ BRAVO. BY SPEAKING OUT FOR GREATER POPULAR POLITICAL

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PARTICIPATION (DESPITE AUTHORITARIAN ACTIONS WHILE A MINISTER)

FRAGA GAINED A CONSIDERABLE FOLLOWING AMONG CONSERVATIVE SECTORS AMENABLE TO CAUTIOUS POLITICAL EVOLUTION.

4. WHILE FRAGA HAS NOT APPEARED OPENLY AS AN ENEMY OF CARRERO, HE HAS REPEATEDLY SEEMED TO OFFER ALTERNATIVES TO ACTIONS BY THE 1969-1973 GOVERNMENT. HE HAS NOT PUBLICLY MADE HIS POSITION CLEAR ON THE NEW GOVERNMENT HEADED BY CARRERO, PREFERRING, FOR THE MOMENT, TO MAINTAIN A DISCREET SILENCE THOUGH HIS SUPPORTERS HAVE PRIVATELY EXPRESSED GENERAL SATISFACTION AT REDUCTION OF LOPEZ RODO-TECHNOCRAT FACTION'S INFLUENCE IN IT. SENDING HIM TO LONDON WOULD ASSURE CARRERO OF FRAGA'S CONTINUED DISCRETION IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL MATTERS. FOR FRAGA, THE APPOINTMENT COULD ENHANCE HIS PRESTIGE AND HIS CHANCES OF EVENTUALLY BECOMING PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY IF HE PLAYS A PROMINENT ROLE IN PRESSING THE SPANISH CLAIM TO GIBRALTAR.

5. ON INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS, FRAGA APPEARS MORE NATIONALISTIC THAN MANY PROMINENT SELF-STYLED "EVOLUTIONISTS" ON THE POLITICAL SCENE. KNOWN FOR HIS VOLATILE TEMPER AND HIGH SENSITIVITY, HE COULD BE EXPECTED TO BE VIGOROUS AND OUTSPOKEN IN CONDUCTING GOS POLICY VIS-A-VIS THE UK. HE SHARES FORMER FONMIN CASTRELLA'S AGGRESSIVE ATTITUDE ON THE GIBRALTAR QUESTION, AND HAS OPPOSED FORMER FONMIN LOPEZ BRAVO'S "SOFT" APPROACH. RIVERO

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